

WASHINGTON, DC- Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) and the U.S. House took another step in upholding its compact with America's veterans by passing the largest single increase in the 77 year history of the Veterans Administration – a \$43.2 billion investment that marks the first time in years the Congress has provided the VA with sufficient funding for veterans' services. The funding, which is \$6.7 billion above the FY07 level and \$3.8 billion above the President's request, was included in the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations for FY 2008. The bill also contains \$21.4 billion for military construction projects, including \$8.2 billion for BRAC, and provides funds to grow the military forces and improve military housing and training facilities.

“For the first time in years the Congress has provided the VA with the requisite funding to fulfill our nation's obligation to America's servicemen and women, their families, and our veterans,” stated Rep. Hoyer. “This funding bill is one of the best veterans' bills to ever come through the House and is going to go a long way in providing every one of our nation's veterans, including 470,000 Maryland veterans, with the health care and benefits they have earned and deserve.”

The bipartisan legislation, which has been hailed by major veterans' organizations as a “major victory” for veterans, will ensure quality health care for 5.8 million patients, including about 263,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, which the VA will treat in FY 2008. The bill will also work to: significantly reduce the 400,000 claims backlog for veterans waiting for disability and other benefits by adding more than 1,100 new claims processors; provide much needed maintenance of VA health care facilities to prevent a Walter Reed-type scandal from occurring elsewhere; and ensure more help for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mental health care issues and lost limbs so that they can rebuild their lives.

With passage of this bill, the 110th Congress has voted for historic increases in veterans' health care and benefits programs, totaling nearly \$12 billion to meet the needs of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. This investment is necessary to help make up for the Bush Administration's and previous Congress' past shortcomings in their treatment of veterans.

“Already, in the first five months of the 110th Congress, the new majority has followed through with our pledge to honor the nation's commitment to our veterans,” stated Rep. Hoyer. “These proud men and women to which we owe so much have fulfilled their duties bravely and honorably, and they deserve nothing less than the support of a nation that recognizes the heroic deeds they have undertaken to protect and promote the freedoms all Americans enjoy.”

House Passes Funding Bill That Makes Historic Investment in Nation's Veterans

Wednesday, 13 June 2007 19:00

###